



Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

Background information on 'EXPLORING THE MANY FACES OF FEAD'

8th FEAD Network Meeting

Paris, 13 – 14 November 2017

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1. Introduction

In 2015, almost a quarter (23.7 %) of the population in the European Union (EU) was at risk of social exclusion.¹ Notably, 26.9 % of children (under 18) and 24.7 % of adults (aged 18 – 64) were at risk of poverty.² Through the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), which was set up in 2014, the European Commission supports the most deprived and vulnerable people in the EU. The Fund's recipients include a wide range of target groups for which deprivation is a multifaceted experience across multiple aspects of life.

In 2016, the Commission set up the FEAD Network as an EU-level platform for the exchange of experience and good practices in order to build the capacity of all relevant stakeholders, including the organisations implementing activities on the ground. To date, seven Network Meetings have been organised, bringing together FEAD stakeholders from all the Member States, including a constantly growing online community. In light of the 8th meeting in Paris, this paper will:

- Take stock of the different ways in which FEAD has been used by the Member States, with a focus on the “many faces” of the operations that have to be taken into account by organisations in order to tailor their support measures to the needs of different recipients;
- Evaluate the extent to which FEAD, as a whole, tackles the “many faces” of social exclusion and hence contributes to wider social inclusion and economic growth across the EU;
- Based on the aforementioned two sections, the paper will then propose a number of guiding questions for discussion during the meeting, in light of the Commission’s ongoing work on the future of FEAD post-2020.

¹ Eurostat defines the ‘at-risk-of-poverty rate’ as the share of people with an equivalised disposable income (after social transfer) below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers.

² Eurostat (2016). *Europe 2020 indicators - poverty and social exclusion*. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion

2. Taking stock of FEAD implementation across the EU

Since the types of poverty and deprivation experienced by vulnerable people vary from one Member State to another³, FEAD offers countries the flexibility to adopt solutions tailored to their own national circumstances. When applying for FEAD funding, Member States can choose to provide food support and/or basic material assistance – complemented with accompanying measures for dealing with personal grievances and the reintegration of the most deprived into the labour market and wider society – under operational programme (OP) I and/or more direct social inclusion measures under OP II. Member States are also given the flexibility to identify the types of target groups they would like to offer and tailor their support services to, as well as the kind of assistance offered, the way in which this assistance is operationalised, and the geographical coverage of this assistance.

While OP I focuses on the provision of food and/or basic material assistance (such as clothing or hygiene items) to the most deprived, the activities under OP II aim to support the most deprived individuals to tackle personal grievances and to reintegrate back into society through different kinds of support activities, such as psychological counselling, language classes, advice on healthcare or computer literacy classes. As defined in the FEAD Regulation, OP II is “*an operational programme supporting the activities outside active labour market measures, consisting in non-financial, non-material assistance, aimed at the social inclusion of the most deprived persons*”.⁴

To date, 24 Member States have selected to implement OP I and 4 have selected OP II. The provision of material assistance as part of OP I is the core activity financed by FEAD, amounting to 97.6 % of allocated funds (excluding TA resources), while the remaining 2.4 % of the resources are allocated to OP II programmes in Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden.

OP I implementation

Looking at how different Member States have been implementing OP I, the way in which countries define the “most deprived” plays a big role in the **groups of people benefiting** from the support offered through the programme. Most often, the target group is determined on the basis of economic criteria. Of the 14 million people who benefited from OP I in 2015, about one third were children aged 15 or under, around a sixth were migrants or people with a foreign background, and roughly one in ten people were seniors (aged 65 or over). Other recipients included homeless people, people with disabilities and people living in remote areas.⁵

Looking at the **types of support services** offered, three kinds of assistance can be offered under OPI: food aid, basic material assistance and accompanying measures. The majority of European countries (13 of them) opted for the provision of both food and basic material assistance. Nine Member States chose to focus on the provision of food, including food packages, meals and/or the collection and distribution of donated food. Only two Member States (Austria and the Czech Republic) are utilising FEAD resources for the provision of basic material goods, such as hygiene items, clothing, sleeping bags and/or school supplies.

The implementation conditions for FEAD require that Member States offer **accompanying measures** in addition to any food and/or basic material assistance. As defined in the FEAD Regulation: “*accompanying measures' means activities provided in addition to the distribution of food and/or basic material assistance with the aim of alleviating social exclusion and/or tackling social emergencies in a more empowering and sustainable way, for example guidance on a balanced diet and budget*”

³ The economic, social and demographic situation is different from one Member State to another.

⁴ Commission Recommendation of 26.4.2017 on the European Pillar of Social Rights C(2017) 2600 final. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/commission-recommendation-establishing-european-pillar-social-rights_en

⁵ EU Commission. (2017). *Summary of the Annual Implementation Reports for the Operational Programmes Co-financed by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived in 2015*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2017/EN/COM-2017-404-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>

management advice".⁶ They are however free to choose to finance this through FEAD or not. The main forms of accompanying measures include referrals to relevant social service providers, provision of information, counselling services and skills development.⁷ Such assistance is crucial to ensuring end recipients receive the high-quality support they need to transition out of poverty and social exclusion – which often go hand in hand. A common way in which partner organisations offer such assistance is by using food distribution as a way to approach end recipients and inform them about the relevant social and support services they have access to.

OP II implementation

Looking at the four Member States implementing OP II, it becomes apparent that all of them have opted to address fairly similar goals, although they focus on **different target groups**, in light of their unique and specific social contexts. The Netherlands dedicates its FEAD funds towards supporting isolated elderly people with a low disposable income to help them reintegrate into social life. Sweden, Denmark and Germany all focus on easing the access of end beneficiaries to social service providers, but their target groups differ. Sweden focuses on newly-arrived and mobile EU citizens; Denmark focuses on homeless people; and Germany seeks to support both of these groups, as well as the children of mobile EU citizens.

Tailored operationalisation of FEAD support

The challenge of tailoring FEAD support to the needs and the social and economic contexts of different groups of recipients often involves making adjustments in the operational implementation of projects.

The **type of end recipient** impacts on the way similar support services are organised. In Germany, for example, the 'Europe Bridge Muenster' project, offering counselling services to newly arrived migrants, is operationalised in a very personal way through counsellors reaching out to their target groups at their homes. By contrast, the 'StreetBer' project in Germany, aimed at providing support services to the homeless, has to adopt a more generic approach and supports its end recipients in 'hotspots' around the city, such as parks, streets and other public places.⁸

The **location of end recipients** also has an impact on the way in which the support services are implemented. As was highlighted repeatedly during previous meetings, it remains a challenge to reach people in geographically remote regions. In France, for example, the Red Cross' "Food Aid on Wheels" programme (*Croix-Rouge sur roues*)⁹ mobilises 42 trucks to support people in rural areas of the country. All trucks are equipped with a variety of services adapted to the needs of the target groups in the different regions, including for example an office space to provide a space for one-to-one advice for end recipients.

⁶ Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council of 11 March 2014 on the Fund For European Aid to the Most Deprived. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32014R0223>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See EU Commission (2016). *Reducing deprivation, supporting inclusion: FEAD case studies*. Available at: <https://www.esf.se/Documents/V%C3%A5ra%20program/FEAD/FEAD%20Catalogue%20of%20case%20studies%202016.pdf>

⁹ For more information on this project, see: <http://www.croix-rouge.fr/Nos-actions/Action-sociale/Aides-alimentaires-maternelles-et-financieres/Croix-Rouge-sur-roues>

3. FEAD's contribution to wider social impact

Social inclusion as a key component of FEAD activities

No matter which operational programme (OP I or OP II) Member States have decided to operate under, and no matter how individual projects are implemented in practice, since the primary aim of FEAD is “to alleviate the worst forms of poverty in the world”,¹⁰ social inclusion proves to be a key component of FEAD activities across both types of Operational Programmes.¹¹ Even though the dimension of social inclusion is at the core of the actions under OP II, “it is also an essential part of OP I”.¹² By ensuring people have access to food and support services, and by ensuring their basic material needs are met, FEAD supports the European Pillar of Social Rights, which aims to guarantee that people can live “a life in dignity at all stages of life”.¹³ Supporting the most disadvantaged groups of people to make this ‘move’ to a life in dignity, away from social exclusion, plays a key role in supporting their participation in society, as was emphasised by the focus theme of the UN’s International Day for the Eradication of Poverty in 2016: “Moving from humiliation and exclusion to participation: Ending poverty in all its forms”.¹⁴ A life in dignity in which people feel a sense of belonging and security provided through access to food and basic material needs is an important safety net known to inspire autonomy, individual action and wider economic growth. As such, FEAD is able to contribute to a wider social impact, illustrating the Commission’s perception that the provision of basic food and material assistance can act as a stepping stone to further social inclusion.

This section will explore the nature of social exclusion and will try to identify why FEAD is well-suited to address this phenomenon and, therefore, have a wider social impact. To do so, it is necessary to consider the social challenges the Fund is attempting to address. A critical component of the issues that many end recipients face relates to the multiplicity and what Amartya Sen (2000) calls the “relational nature” of social exclusion.¹⁵ Often a number of different but related factors will ultimately create situations of vulnerability, of which economic poverty is just one element. FEAD has a wider social impact by allowing its interventions to focus on and potentially have an impact on a range of factors, thereby acknowledging that social exclusion is not manifested in a one-dimensional way.

Responding to the multi-dimensional needs of end recipients (France)

The French organisation Secours populaire français (Spf)¹⁶ aims to tackle different forms of social exclusion in a holistic way, taking into account the economic, social and family circumstances of their end recipients. The work of the organisation focuses on helping people who are experiencing poverty to become actively involved in addressing their situation. Two particular services – the “**Solidarity Reception Centres**” (PASS) and “**Solidarity Self-Service**” (LSS) – are at the heart of the approach. The PASS are places where people (families as well as individuals) can receive help and enjoy an environment where they are welcomed and respected. Alongside these permanent reception centres, SPF has also established a mobile outreach service in order to respond to the specific needs of homeless people and those living in rural areas.

¹⁰ EU Commission. (2017). *Summary of the Annual Implementation Reports for the Operational Programmes Co-financed by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived in 2015*. Available at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2017/EN/COM-2017-404-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>

¹¹ See EU Commission (2017). *FEAD’s contribution to sustainable social inclusion: Thematic Dossier 1*. Available at: ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=18398&langId=en

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Commission Recommendation of 26.4.2017 on the European Pillar of Social Rights C(2017) 2600 final.

Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/commission-recommendation-establishing-european-pillar-social-rights_en

¹⁴ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/international-day-for-the-eradication-of-poverty-homepage/2016-2.html>

¹⁵ Sen, A. (2000). *Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny*. Available at:

<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29778/social-exclusion.pdf>

¹⁶ For more information on this project, see: www.secourspopulaire.fr

Social impact: multiple dimensions

As outlined above, social exclusion is a multidimensional experience. As a result, the positive impact of interventions aimed at tackling the symptoms of social exclusion can be significant. Conversely, the failure to address some of the issues arising from social exclusion can have large economic and social costs for society, which underscores the importance of the work that FEAD-funded projects do. Below are examples of some of the issues addressed by FEAD-funded projects, which both lead to and manifest themselves as social exclusion. In highlighting (albeit non-exhaustively) some of the examples of the way in which FEAD speaks to the needs of different end recipients and different dimensions of social exclusion in both its Operational Programmes, we can gauge the broad and varied ways in which the Fund has a social impact.

FEAD-funded projects are targeted towards some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including migrants. A 2015 study on the socio-economic **inclusion of migrants** across four European cities¹⁷ emphasised the benefits that migrant EU workers can bring in, crediting them with initiating entrepreneurial ideas to different areas, boosting the housing market through buying accommodation and purchasing goods and services, which in turn sometimes sparked new business initiatives to meet demand. Providing migrants with education in-country can contribute to their social integration, which in turn has the potential to change the sometimes sceptical attitudes of local people towards those with an immigrant background. Helping migrants to overcome language barriers is particularly important, thereby underscoring the value of FEAD projects that offer local language classes to migrants and other vulnerable people.

Supporting the social inclusion of newly arrived and mobile EU citizens (Sweden)

The Swedish project '**Digniti Omnia – Better Life for All**'¹⁸ addresses the needs of this specific target group in a holistic way. A range of activities are offered which are designed to help newly-arrived and mobile EU citizens acquire useful skills, such as digital literacy (e.g. how to use email and Skype), Swedish language skills and knowledge of their personal rights as EU citizens. In doing so, they aim to help beneficiaries integrate into the Swedish social domain by increasing their employability as well as their ability to navigate the national social system.

Social exclusion can also lead to and manifest itself as **homelessness**. FEAD-funded projects targeted towards homeless people are key in alleviating social exclusion. A 2013 study¹⁹ coordinated by the European Observatory of Homelessness outlines the multiple costs of homelessness, including for example those linked to the need for additional health and social services, loss of economic productivity associated with homelessness, as well as the long-term social, economic and health consequences for people who are homeless. This dimension of FEAD-funded work is addressed through various projects, particularly in Denmark, where the UDENFOR project focuses specifically on providing assistance to homeless people under its implementation of OP II and contributes to the broader social impact that the Fund can have.

¹⁷ EU Commission (2015). *Socio-economic inclusion of migrant EU workers in 4 cities. Synthesis report*. Available at : ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14423&langId=en

¹⁸ For more information on this project, see: <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/vaxjo/digniti-omnia>

¹⁹ European Observatory of Homelessness (2013). *The Costs of Homelessness in Europe*. Available at: <https://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2013/feantsa%20cost%20of%20homelessness.pdf>

Supporting the homeless population through FEAD (Denmark)

The **UDENFOR**²⁰ project is operational in Copenhagen and Aarhus, and offers homeless people access to a locker room where they can safely leave their belongings in storage boxes. At this facility, they also have the opportunity to talk with volunteers who can offer advice on finding employment, food, access to healthcare, administrative support etc. The project also offers opportunities for temporary employment in the locker room facility, as well as in a café run by the project in Aarhus. Counselling services and training sessions are available to support the social inclusion of homeless people. It is estimated that the project delivers over 100 multilingual counselling sessions per week and can provide beds for 40 individuals.

Mental health issues can be a further component that contributes to the social exclusion of end recipients and constitute therefore another critical aspect of FEAD-funded projects and a means for them to increase their social reach. The **Finnish Central Association for Mental Health** (*Mielenterveyden Keskusliitto*)²¹, which raises awareness of mental health issues and existing services for rehabilitation, and the Maltese **LEAP** project, which offers in-house counselling services and refers individuals to relevant social service providers, are both key examples of how FEAD funding addresses this further dimension of social exclusion.

It is also important to note the value of **food distribution projects** that provide a critical point of social contact with end recipients who may otherwise be socially isolated. This can have a positive impact on the wellbeing of end recipients and act as a stepping stone to further engagement on more profound issues. OP I accompanying measures are therefore a good way to address not only material poverty but also more complex issues surrounding social exclusion, as they provide volunteers and trained social workers with a first opportunity to engage, particularly with hard-to-reach individuals.

Using food provision as a gateway (Slovakia)²²

In Slovakia, as in other countries, food can act as a gateway to addressing additional social issues. As a result, food packages are distributed in the hope that they will not only provide basic products to those in need, but that end recipients will also have a chance to learn about and access other relevant support services. A **network of accredited social workers** distribute the food parcels and provide counselling and advice as part of a holistic, personalised and professional service. In many cases, the social workers signpost end recipients to additional non-FEAD services if they are in need of more in-depth assistance.

To conclude, FEAD gives Member States the freedom and flexibility to address the multiple dimensions of social exclusion and, in doing so, to have a significant social impact given the range of issues addressed and target groups reached. This section has given just a few examples of the ways in which FEAD addresses some of the dimensions of social exclusion. The FEAD Regulation has significant differences from its predecessor, the EU's Food Distribution programme for the Most Deprived Persons (MDP), largely in relation to the scope of possible assistance. As a result, FEAD has more scope for far-reaching, profound social impact that addresses the diverse dimensions of social exclusion.

²⁰ For more information on this project, see: <http://www.udenfor.dk/>

²¹ For more information on this initiative, see: <http://mtkl.fi/>

²² For more information on this project, see:

https://redcross.eu/uploads/files/Latest%20News/FEAD%20network%20meetings/FEAD%20network%20meeting%206th%20FEAD%20Network%20Meeting%20Report_Yammer.pdf

4. Looking ahead: FEAD post-2020

Tackling poverty and social exclusion is a **multidimensional challenge**, as the needs of end recipients are dependent on a number of personal factors, such as age, gender, migrant background and social status. In addition, the social and economic contexts of the geographical region in which the end recipients are located also impact on how they can be supported.²³ As such, the flexibility of the current Fund under the shared management of the European Commission and the Managing Authorities in the Member States has allowed participating countries to tailor their food, material and non-material support measures to the needs of selected target groups, including the practical operationalisation of the funded projects.

Despite the differences across Member States in how FEAD is implemented and the types of people that are supported, the multiple social challenges FEAD helps to address have an **important impact on EU society as a whole, both in economic and social terms**. Moreover, the use of food distribution acts as a key first point of contact to advise end recipients on additional and individualised accompanying social inclusion measures. This point was highlighted repeatedly in previous FEAD Network Meetings as one of the most effective ways to tackle poverty and deprivation at grassroots level.

As a stocktaking exercise at the end of the second year of the Network, and in light of the Commission's ongoing preparation of the proposal for FEAD post-2020, the **8th FEAD Network Meeting** provides a valuable opportunity to reflect on these "many faces of FEAD" and how these should be reflected in the future programme. As a guiding question for the discussions during the meeting, this paper would therefore like to propose to participants to keep in mind the following overarching question:

"Given the differences both between and within the different Member States in terms of the practical implementation of FEAD, how can we ensure the programme is making the greatest possible impact on the multiple challenges related to social inclusion, cohesion and economic growth which the Fund aims to address on a larger scale?"

In addition, we invite the delegates to reflect on questions related to the following challenges which emerged from previous Network Meetings and are part of the ongoing discussions on the future of FEAD:

- FEAD is currently implemented through **shared management**. What would be the benefits and/or disadvantages to either maintaining this arrangement or moving towards indirect management with implementation through contacts with partner organisations?
- Which mechanisms are currently working well and where is there room for improvement?
- Which concrete measures could be taken to **reduce the administrative burden** coupled with the implementation of the programme?

²³ An important challenge, for example, is reaching end recipients in geographically remote areas.

Contact us

Visit our website: <http://ec.europa.eu/feadnetwork>

Or email us with your questions: FEAD.Network@ecorys.com

We look forward to hearing from you!

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